Report of the Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management Community Workshops

November 22-29, 2004

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Oceans and Coastal Management Report 2005-01

Fisheries and Oceans Canada | Pêches et Océans Canada

Canada

105-06119/

Oceans and Coastal Management Report 2005-01

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January 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between November 22nd and 29th 2004, the ESSIM Planning Office hosted a series of workshops in coastal communities around Nova Scotia. The purpose of these workshops was to expand opportunities for participation in the ESSIM Initiative and solicit input on components of the upcoming Integrated Ocean Management Plan. The workshops were attended by a diverse group of stakeholders with varying levels of previous exposure to the Initiative.

During each workshop, the Planning Office delivered a presentation on the ESSIM Initiative and sought feedback from participants around three key topics: the ESSIM Planning Area, the Integrated Ocean Management Plan, and the Collaborative Planning Model. Participants were also welcomed to provide comments on other aspects of the plan and process as they saw fit.

A significant portion of the discussion on the Planning Area focussed on boundaries. Almost unanimously, participants felt that boundaries should be defined based primarily on ecological criteria. Many participants felt that the Planning Area would better reflect ecosystem boundaries if it were expanded to include the entire Scotian Shelf. Others noted the ecological continuum between the inshore and offshore and felt that the coastal zone should be incorporated into the plan as soon as possible. On the other hand, a large number of participants emphasized that it would be more practical to continue planning for the existing ESSIM area, and favoured maintaining the existing boundaries for the time being.

Most participants were satisfied with the objectives-based approach that will be employed in the Integrated Ocean Management Plan; however, a number of concerns were raised as to how the objectives will be developed and implemented. Specifically, participants emphasized the importance of: involving all stakeholders in the development of the objectives; monitoring, reviewing and revising the objectives on an ongoing basis; and ensuring that responsible departments and agencies are accountable for achieving the objectives.

While there was support for the general design of the Collaborative Planning Model, some significant challenges to its effectiveness were identified by workshop participants. One of the most widespread concerns about the model was that consensus would be difficult to achieve with a diverse group of stakeholders. Participants also felt that fully including all stakeholders without sacrificing efficient decision making would be a significant challenge. Some groups, such as First Nations, had specific concerns about how their sectors would fit into the model.

Despite the concerns raised during the workshops, the feedback received generally affirms support for the overall direction of the ESSIM Initiative. Most participants were generally supportive of integrated management as an approach and were in favour of the further development of the ESSIM Plan.

Feedback from the workshops will be incorporated into a draft Integrated Ocean Management Plan that is currently being developed by the Planning Office. The draft plan will be released in February of 2005 and reviewed at the 3rd ESSIM Forum Workshop. Ideally, the draft plan will be accepted by stakeholders, endorsed by decision-makers, and approved under the *Oceans Act* by February 2006.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management (ESSIM) Initiative is a collaborative ocean planning process being led by Fisheries and Oceans Canada(DFO), Maritimes Region. The primary goal of this initiative is to develop an integrated ocean management plan that will consider all aspects of sustainable human use and conservation for this large marine area. The development of such a plan involves a broad range of interests, including government, First Nations, ocean industry and resource users, environmental groups, coastal communities, and researchers. A central ESSIM Planning Office has been established to coordinate the Initiative and ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate.

To promote discussion and collaboration with and between stakeholder groups, the Planning Office has hosted two 'ESSIM Forum Workshops,' in which all interested parties were invited to participate. The workshops were held at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax in 2002 and 2003, and included discussions on many aspects of ocean planning and management. Multi-sector planning teams assisted the Planning Office in designing these workshops, each of which was attended by approximately 150 people from a diverse range of ocean interests.

While the ESSIM Forum Workshops were well attended, it became apparent after the second workshop that some sectors, such as coastal communities, were not fully represented. Meanwhile, smaller stakeholder groups based in rural Nova Scotia commented on the challenge involved in attending a multi-day workshop held in Halifax. Recognizing the need to include all stakeholders, ESSIM Forum participants recommended a decentralization process to engage a broader array of individuals, communities, and groups from around Nova Scotia. In 2004, based on this recommendation, the ESSIM Planning Office organized a series of Community Workshops across the province to expand opportunities for participation in the ESSIM Initiative.

As with earlier Forum Workshops, the Planning Office worked with a multi-sector planning team in designing the Community Workshops. Venues were chosen so as to be regionally representative and extend opportunities for participation to the greatest possible number of communities. Liverpool, Ship Harbour, and Port Hawkesbury were all chosen as workshop locations, such that a workshop would be held on the South Shore, the Eastern Shore, and in Cape Breton. Although the South Shore does not fall within the existing ESSIM Planning Area, some fishing groups from southern Nova Scotia are licensed to fish on the Eastern Shelf, and stakeholders from the South Shore could be affected by future boundary adjustments or related planning processes. The planning team therefore felt that it was important to consult with communities in this region.

Between November 22nd and November 29th, 2004, two workshop sessions were held in each of the three locations, for a total of six Community Workshops. Both afternoon and evening sessions were offered in each location, so as to make the workshops as accessible as possible to all interested parties. Each workshop was two hours and thirty minutes long and consisted of a brief open house, a formal presentation, and group discussions on key components of the ESSIM Initiative. The main topics covered in the presentation included: background and history of the Initiative; the ESSIM Planning Area; the Integrated Ocean Management Plan; and the Collaborative Planning Model. To complement the presentation, Fact Sheets on key aspects of the Initiative were

distributed to participants in advance. Copies of these Fact Sheets are available from the ESSIM Planning Office or the ESSIM website (http://www.mar.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/oceans/e/essim/essim-intro-e.html).

The Planning Office sought detailed feedback from participants on several of the topics presented at the workshops, including the Planning Area and its boundaries, the Integrated Ocean Management Plan, and the Collaborative Planning Model. For each of these topics, questions for consideration by stakeholders were posed in the presentation and Fact Sheets. A workbook was also distributed to workshop participants, which provided an outline of the presentation and space to respond to key questions. A number of completed workbooks were collected after each session.

A total of thirty eight people attended the six Community Workshops, representing a diverse array of sectors including fishing groups, First Nations, community associations, environmental NGOs, regional development authorities, and municipalities. Sixteen people participated in the Liverpool workshops, nine in Ship Harbour, and thirteen in Port Hawkesbury. Levels of familiarity with the ESSIM Initiative varied significantly among participants, as described in the appendix.

In all of the locations open discussions arose and extensive, valuable feedback was provided. This feedback is summarized below, divided by topic, sub-divided by location, and followed by a synthesis and conclusions. Direct quotes from workshop participants are presented in text boxes throughout the document. An overall discussion of the effectiveness of the workshops and recommendations for the future are provided in the appendix.

2.0 WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

2.1 Feedback on the ESSIM Planning Area

Background

The ESSIM Planning Area extends from the eastern edge of the LaHave Basin to the centre of the Laurentian Channel, and from the coastline to the seaward extent of Canadian jurisdiction. The initial focus of the Initiative is the offshore, specifically beyond the 12 nautical mile Territorial Sea. This area was selected for integrated ocean management because it possesses important living and non-living marine resources, areas of high biological diversity and productivity, and increasing levels of multiple use and competition for ocean space and resources. The boundaries are defined based on a mix of ecological, administrative, and political criteria.

It has been proposed by a number of stakeholders that the Planning Area should be expanded westwards to the Northeast Channel so as to include the entire Scotian Shelf. There are both ecological and practical reasons for considering such an expansion. The cold Nova Scotia coastal current diverts offshore in proximity to the Northeast Channel, creating a corresponding ecosystem boundary. Moreover, many datasets, human activities, and management bodies apply to the entire Scotian Shelf, and many of the participants in the ESSIM process are involved in activities that are shelf-wide in nature. In order to solicit input that might help to inform future decision on boundary adjustments, participants in the Community Workshops were asked for their opinions on the existing Planning Area boundaries and the criteria used to select them.

It is the intention of DFO to continue to collaborate with the Province of Nova Scotia and coastal communities to establish complementary management initiatives for coastal areas nested within the ESSIM Planning Area. In accordance with Canada's Oceans Strategy, the Department also will be seeking to establish integrated management initiatives elsewhere, so as to eventually include all Canadian marine waters. To provide direction for future initiatives, workshop participants were asked whether they would like to see integrated management occurring elsewhere. Responses are outlined below.

Feedback from Liverpool

Discussions on criteria for determining Planning Area boundaries generally affirmed the approach taken to date by the ESSIM Initiative. Most participants felt that ecological criteria were of greatest importance in defining boundaries. Where possible, it was recommended that management planning areas be designed around ecosystems. It was suggested that ecologically significant areas should be considered and if possible included in their entirety when establishing planning areas. Participants recognized that ecosystems are interconnected and that it might not always be possible to clearly distinguish one ecosystem from another. In which case, other criteria could be taken into account.

> *"Geographic ecosystem boundaries should be the pre-eminent criterion."*

Most participants felt that socio-economic criteria should be another major consideration in defining planning area boundaries. Some participants mentioned the importance of considering traditional patterns of human use. Participants specified that socio-economic

criteria should be combined with ecological criteria to create boundaries reflecting both, rather than using one or the other in isolation. For example, it was suggested that in cases where it is difficult to draw a clear line between ecosystems, socio-economic considerations might be used to clarify where the boundary should be drawn.

Some participants believed that trans-boundary (specifically Canada-US) activities and arrangements should be considered when defining planning area boundaries. Fishing industry representatives in particular mentioned the importance of considering trans-boundary stock arrangements and agreements. This could be of particular relevance on the western Scotian Shelf where Canada has trans-boundary arrangements with the United States.

"The ocean has no boundaries, so you should include large areas"

As has been the case with most previous discussions on boundaries, there was a divergence of opinion as to whether the Planning Area should be expanded or maintained in its current form. A significant number of participants generally supported expanding the Planning Area to include the entire Scotian Shelf. Arguments in favour of the expansion were made mostly on ecological grounds. Participants felt that the existing western boundary was largely artificial and did not represent a distinct natural boundary. A boundary along the Northeast Channel was perceived to be more consistent with ecosystem boundaries and to better reflect the geologic characteristics of the shelf. A few participants favoured an expansion of the Planning Area not because they felt the boundaries would be more logical, but simply because they wanted to see integrated management on the western shelf.

Most of those in favour of maintaining the existing Planning Area boundaries put forward arguments based on practical grounds. Many people felt that it was important to develop an effective plan for the existing area before expanding the boundaries. It was noted that expanding the boundary would increase the risks involved in the Initiative and potentially decrease the chances of success. Even some of the participants who were in favour of the boundary expansion were concerned about the availability of resources and the capacity of managers to address a larger area. Others felt that Southwest Nova was a distinct area populated by distinct communities that should be treated separately from the eastern shelf. Nonetheless, these participants felt that it was important to involve stakeholders from Southwest Nova in the Initiative, since they would have at least an indirect stake in its outcomes.

In regards to priority areas for the future expansion of integrated management, there was widespread agreement that the coastal zone should be a focus. Before the topic of boundaries was introduced, several participants made comments in favour of including coastal and estuarine areas in the Initiative as soon as possible. It was noted that estuaries, coastal areas, and the offshore are closely linked and interdependent. For example, nutrients, pollution, and wildlife move from the inshore to the offshore, and vice versa. In light of this interconnection, it was felt that the Initiative should be incorporating a watershed-based approach and considering inshore and offshore ecosystems comprehensively.

"The offshore can't be managed without managing the inshore...somebody has to be responsible for the whole thing."

"Integrated management should occur everywhere!"

Several participants expressed a desire to see integrated management occurring everywhere, which is consistent with the long-term goals of Canada's Oceans Strategy. Some of these participants gave unconditional support to the establishment of integrated management in all Canadian waters, while others were more tempered in their response, supporting the expansion of integrated management only if communities were fully involved and supportive.

Participants suggested that a system of prioritization would be needed in determining where integrated management should happen next. Some people felt that priority should be given to ecologically significant areas, while others felt that areas where non-renewable resources are being extracted should be a priority. It was also suggested that the location of future initiatives should be dictated by communities, and that integrated management should proceed first in those areas where communities are best prepared and most eager to take a leading role.

Feedback from Ship Harbour

"It makes sense to outline the shelf by biodiversity."

Feedback on the criteria for selecting boundaries was similar in Ship Harbour to Liverpool. Participants generally agreed that ecological criteria should be a primary consideration, but felt that such criteria should be tempered by practical considerations such as availability of resources, patterns of ocean use, and existing management regimes. It was pointed out that ecosystem-based management—which is a fundamental principle of Canada's Oceans Strategy—will be easier to apply where boundaries are defined around ecological criteria.

"Why slice up the area?"

In both of the Ship Harbour workshops, questions were raised about the western ESSIM boundary before detailed discussions on the Planning Area began. Several participants felt that the western boundary was counter-intuitive and artificial. Concern was expressed that the boundary might be perceived (however inaccurately) as an attempt to impose further regulation on disempowered Eastern Shore fishing groups, while avoiding the more powerful South Shore fishing industry.

Conversely, some participants noted differences between the South Shore and Eastern Shore fishing industries as a potential argument in favour of maintaining the existing western boundary. As in Liverpool there was some concern that expanding the Planning Area would add complexity and make it more difficult to implement integrated management in the short term. Comments were made in favour of developing an adequate plan for the eastern shelf first before moving west; however, most participants in the Ship Harbour workshops favoured expanding the Planning Area to include the entire Scotian Shelf over the longer term.

Opinions regarding additional areas where integrated management should be occurring were very similar to those expressed in Liverpool. Inshore and coastal areas were considered a priority area for the application of integrated management, and questions were raised about the timeline for their inclusion. The need for regulatory coordination in the coastal zone was noted specifically. Again it was suggested that local communities should lead the way in future initiatives, and that sound local planning was needed in coastal areas.

Feedback from Port Hawkesbury

Feedback from the Port Hawkesbury workshop reflected comments heard elsewhere. There was virtually unanimous consensus that ecological criteria should be of primary importance in defining planning area boundaries. The need to approach ecosystems holistically, and to consider human use as a component of the overall ecosystem, was emphasized.

> *"I think they should follow ecosystem boundaries"*

Opinions diverged as to whether the existing boundaries were appropriate or whether they should be adjusted. Many participants stressed the need to start small in order to ensure success. Structural differences between fisheries on the eastern and western Scotian Shelf were raised as a potential argument in favour of managing these areas separately. For example, it was pointed out that on the western shelf there are inshore, mid-shore, and offshore lobster fleets, whereas on the eastern shelf the lobster fishery is predominantly inshore. On the other hand, most participants felt that the Planning Area should reflect ecosystem boundaries and that including the entire shelf would help to achieve this end; however, it was pointed out that ecosystems could be defined at various scales, and that any boundary would be somewhat arbitrary, given the interconnectedness of all ecosystems. Overall there appeared to be slightly more support for maintaining the existing boundaries than expanding, at least for the short term.

> *"Take the whole shelf, not just a small part"*
>
> *"No, start small."*

Inshore and coastal areas were again identified as a priority for future integrated management, with specific reference made to the Bras d'Or Lakes. Several participants echoed sentiments from Liverpool in saying that integrated management should be occurring everywhere. In fact, virtually all of the participants who responded supported the expansion of integrated management to some degree, although several felt that new initiatives should be introduced gradually, in order to give stakeholders time to adjust and managers time to learn from experience.

> *"This is good and should be applied elsewhere."*

Synthesis of Planning Area Discussions

In reference to criteria for selecting boundaries, there was consensus among participants at all of the workshops that ecological criteria should be a high priority. There was also general agreement that socio-economic criteria such as human use patterns, and practical considerations such as availability of resources, should be taken into account. It was felt that these criteria should not be considered in isolation from one another, but rather that they should be integrated in order to identify areas where ecological, administrative, and socio-economic characteristics coincide. This reflects the approach used to date by DFO, which has its basis in the *Policy and Operational Framework for Integrated Management in Canada*.

A divergence of opinions was expressed in relation to the existing Planning Area boundaries. Many participants felt that the Planning Area should be expanded to include the entire Scotian Shelf, primarily in order to better reflect ecosystem boundaries. A number of participants commented on their impression of the existing western boundary as artificial and inconsistent with an ecosystem approach; however, an almost equal number expressed concern about expanding the Planning Area before a plan is

completed for the eastern shelf. The latter tended to feel that practical considerations, such as availability of resources and the need for simplicity, outweighed ecological arguments in favour of a boundary expansion. It should be noted that it was not possible to present a full analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of all possible boundary options during the workshop, and therefore the feedback was based primarily on the initial reactions and personal experience of participants.

There was reasonably broad support across all locations for bringing integrated management to additional areas in the future. Coastal zones were identified frequently as a priority focus for future initiatives, especially where strong local interest and capacity exists. Meanwhile, a significant number of participants felt that integrated management should be occurring everywhere.

The overall level of consistency in feedback between the workshops was noteworthy. Although some minor regional differences emerged, stakeholders from across the province appeared to have similar perspectives on most issues related to the Planning Area and its boundaries. These perspectives were generally consistent with those expressed at the ESSIM Forum Workshops and other stakeholder consultations.

2.2 Feedback on the Integrated Ocean Management Plan

Background

The primary aim of the ESSIM Initiative is to develop and implement an Integrated Ocean Management Plan for the Eastern Scotian Shelf. This multi-year, strategic level plan will provide long-term direction and a common basis for integrated, ecosystem-based, adaptive management of all marine activities. The proposed timeline would see the plan developed, supported by all stakeholders, endorsed by all decision-makers, and approved under the *Oceans Act* by 2006.

The Plan will employ an objectives-based approach to ocean management for the eastern Scotian Shelf. It will contain a set of long-term overarching ecosystem and human use objectives to support agreed-upon outcomes for environmental, economic, social and institutional sustainability. These high-level objectives will be supported by operational objectives, specific indicators, reference points, and associated management strategies and actions. Interrelationships between ecosystem and human use objectives will be recognized and reflected in management approaches.

The initial set of objectives contained in the Plan will focus on ecosystem and human use aspects that transcend individual marine sectors, such as access to ocean space by multiple ocean users, or ecosystem components that are affected by several human activities. In many cases, operational objectives will be expressed in terms of monitoring requirements designed to increase our level of information and understanding of the marine system. In cases where management strategies can be specified for an objective, the Plan will enable existing sector-based management processes to adopt, reflect or incorporate the intent of the objective and develop appropriate management actions to support it. More detailed management strategies and actions will be defined through short-term (biennial) Action Plans.

To solicit feedback on the proposed plan and planning approach, community workshop participants were asked whether they agreed with the objectives-based approach, whether there were other tools or approaches that should be considered, and whether they supported using short-term Action Plans as a mechanism for implementation. Responses are outlined below.

Liverpool

> *"Rome wasn't built in a day, but this is the way to go. It'll work, I think, if we are flexible and responsive."*

The objectives-based approach generally received broad endorsement as a starting point for integrated ocean management. Participants recognized the need for new approaches that could take into account 'the big picture' and provide long-term direction for managers. Several participants commented that the objectives-based approach seemed like the natural and logical way to proceed. Municipal planners pointed out that this approach was consistent with accepted planning principles used on land.

Questions were raised as to how the plan and its objectives would relate to existing management structures. Fishers were interested in how the ESSIM Initiative would affect fisheries management processes. Planning Office staff explained that existing management processes would continue to operate, but would incorporate the ESSIM objectives in their activities. For example, in the case of fisheries, the ESSIM objectives will be incorporated into fisheries management plans as they are renewed.

Participants felt that it was important to ensure that the process for establishing objectives be as inclusive and open as possible. On the other hand, it was recognized that it might be more difficult to engage stakeholders in objective setting than in more action-oriented discussions. There was concern that in some cases different sectors might have opposing objectives that would be hard to reconcile. In such cases, participants noted the importance of a balanced process that would not favour one sector over another.

> *"Once implementation starts, you will have a better feel for how to improve the approach."*

Significant discussion arose around the need for flexibility in the management approach. Participants felt that the objectives ought to be reviewed on a regular basis, especially during the first few years, and adapted based on experience. Participants also acknowledged that enforcement and monitoring mechanisms would be needed to ensure that objectives are actually met. To facilitate this process, participants thought that effective avenues for communication between managers and stakeholders would be essential.

In regards to the use of Action Plans, participants supported the idea in principle but stressed the need for flexibility. In particular, some participants thought that a rigid two-year time frame was inappropriate. There was concern that a two-year lifespan for Action Plans was too long and would not allow for adequate adaptation. A more flexible schedule was recommended. On the other hand, some participants expressed concern that using short term Action Plans might draw attention away from important long-term objectives that could not be achieved over a two-year period. Several participants noted the importance of prioritizing objectives and developing appropriate timelines when creating Action Plans.

Ship Harbour

Concerns and comments similar to those raised in Liverpool emerged in Ship Harbour with regard to the plan and the objectives-based management approach. Participants commented on the need for a balanced and inclusive objective setting process that would take into account stakeholder experiences. Again, there was some concern that different sectors or stakeholders might have opposing interests. For example, seal management was raised as a potentially divisive issue that some participants thought the Initiative ought to address.

Participants felt that the management approach should be action-oriented, forward-looking, and free from political influence. Questions were raised as to the lifespan of the plan and whether the approval process would be renewed on a cyclical basis. As in Liverpool, the need for monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to ensure effective implementation was expressed.

Port Hawkesbury

Support for the objectives-based approach was strong in Port Hawkesbury, though again some concerns were raised and a variety of recommendations were offered. Several participants commented on the need for a holistic approach that would look at the big picture and consider all factors comprehensively. The need to maintain open channels of communication between stakeholders and managers, ensure flexibility in the approach, monitor and review objectives on a regular basis, and involve as many stakeholders as possible in establishing objectives, were all widely recognized. Again concerns were raised that not all sectors would have the same objectives, potentially resulting in conflicts.

> *"Everyone has their own objective and agenda for achieving that objective."*

> *"The plan will have no teeth since each government department refuses to give up its authority"*

Additional questions were raised about monitoring, enforcement, and implementation of the plan. Many participants were eager to see the initiative move from the planning phase to the delivery of concrete outcomes. The importance of ensuring that departments or agencies responsible for implementation be accountable for achieving the objectives was expressed. As in the previous community workshops, questions were raised as to how the Initiative would relate to existing management processes, especially fisheries management, and how the objectives would be reflected in fisheries management plans.

There was significant discussion at the workshop as to how the management approach would take into account new ocean uses that might emerge after the plan is developed. Participants felt that it would be important to ensure that the objectives could be easily adapted to address unforeseen activities. In particular, the importance of establishing mechanisms for dealing with uncertainty (e.g., scientific uncertainty regarding environmental impacts) was raised. Planning Office staff pointed out that the high-level objectives would be sufficiently broad to capture any new activities on the shelf, and that the precautionary principle would be fundamental to the Initiative.

A number of alternative or complementary management approaches were discussed at the Port Hawkesbury workshop. It was suggested that an '*opportunistic approach*' that would look for and take advantage of spontaneously emerging opportunities or synergies could play a valuable role. Other participants felt that a rights-based approach that would consider the entitlements of various sectors and stakeholders could be useful, especially for First Nations. Generally it was agreed that these approaches should be used in combination with the objectives-based approach, and not as alternatives.

In regard to action planning, there was general support for the use of short-term Action Plans, but concerns were raised about the specific timelines. As in Liverpool, some participants thought that a biennial timeframe for developing Action Plans was too long, and recommended that plans be revised more frequently in order to allow for adaptation and to reflect change.

> *Ttimes are changing quickly, and the short term action pla[illegible]ay take too long."*

Synthesis of the Integrated Ocean Management Plan Discussions

Across all of the workshops there was consistent support for the objectives-based approach, but some common concerns and recommendations emerged in regard to implementation. The need to engage stakeholders fully in the objective-setting process was repeatedly iterated. There was fairly widespread concern that competing objectives might be brought forward by stakeholders from different sectors, and the need for balance and fairness in this regard was mentioned. Regular monitoring, review, and adaptation of the objectives were widely recommended.

At several workshops questions were raised as to how the objectives would actually be implemented and how they would affect existing management processes. Support for the use of short-term Action Plans as an implementation mechanism was expressed at all of the workshops, although a number of concerns were raised about the proposed biennial timeline. It was suggested on several occasions that this timeline might be too long and not allow sufficient opportunity for adaptation and revision. The need for flexibility in the action planning process was a common sentiment.

Overall, the feedback received affirms the proposed management approach as a sensible way forward, while identifying some potential challenges and providing useful suggestions for implementation. In particular, it is clear that workshop participants consider flexibility, adaptation, balance, inclusion, ongoing communication, and monitoring to be essential to the success of the approach.

2.3 Feedback on the Collaborative Planning Model

Background

Unlike more traditional planning processes, the ESSIM Initiative employs a multi-stakeholder, collaborative planning model. This means that the work of developing and implementing the management plan is done by all sectors and stakeholders through consensus. The intent of this process is to develop a plan that is accepted by all stakeholders, endorsed by all legislative and regulatory authorities, and approved under the *Oceans Act* by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

The proposed ESSIM Collaborative Planning Model has three integral components: the ESSIM Forum; the Stakeholder Roundtable; and the Planning Office. The ESSIM Forum and Planning Office were established in 2001, while the Stakeholder Roundtable (SRT) is newly proposed and has yet to be established.

The ESSIM Forum is a collective body of all stakeholders. It is a mechanism for information exchange, liaison, consultation, and feedback. The Forum assembled as a group in 2002 and 2003, and will meet again in early 2005 to review an initial draft of the management plan.

The proposed Stakeholder Roundtable is intended to be a smaller group of stakeholders that works closely with the Planning Office on plan development and implementation. It will be composed of approximately 26 members representing all major sectors and stakeholders. It is intended to be large enough to allow broad representation yet small enough to allow efficient decision making. The first major task of the SRT will be to develop and ultimately recommend the draft ESSIM plan to decision makers. The SRT will work by consensus, with individual departments and agencies retaining their authority to make decisions if consensus cannot be reached.

The Planning Office is the coordinating body for the ESSIM Initiative, and provides expertise in plan development. The Planning Office works directly with the ESSIM Forum and SRT, and provides support to sector coalitions and working groups. It is also responsible for ensuring that all stakeholders have an opportunity to participate in the ESSIM process.

Collaborative planning requires significant effort from government departments and agencies in order to coordinate, align, and integrate policies and programs. At the operational level, a Federal-Provincial ESSIM Working Group, with representation from all relevant government departments and agencies, has been actively discussing the ESSIM Initiative for several years. This working group is the main forum for intergovernmental and interdepartmental collaboration on operational issues. A Regional Committee on Ocean Management, which would include senior representatives of relevant government departments and First Nations, has been proposed to provide executive level policy oversight for the ESSIM Initiative and other ocean management processes.

Participants at the community workshops were asked whether the proposed collaborative planning model is an effective, transparent, and inclusive process. They were also asked how sectors can be effectively represented at the stakeholder roundtable, and how stakeholder participation can be encouraged and maintained. Responses are outlined below.

Liverpool

An animated discussion arose around the collaborative planning model at the Liverpool workshop. Participants generally acknowledged the need to involve stakeholders in ocean planning and felt that the model had the potential to achieve this end to some degree, given appropriate implementation; however, several participants commented that it was too early to determine whether the model as presented would be effective. The best indicator of effectiveness—as these participants pointed out—will be the actual success of the model once it is applied.

"Decisions should be made by consensus, and that is good. Participants should be pushed in this direction. However, as a last resort, and if the issue is urgent, decisions should be taken through voting."

The principle of operating by consensus was recognized as an admirable ideal, but many participants felt that it would not always be possible to achieve. The diversity of interests and perspectives among stakeholders was identified as a significant challenge to consensus. Many participants felt that other options for decision making, such as voting, should be considered where consensus cannot be reached. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that seemingly competing sectors often share common interest or goals (e.g., sustainable resource management) which could facilitate consensus-building around many issues.

"It is very important to assure that "ordinary" citizens and "little guys" (especially small-scale fishers) be given an adequate voice on this roundtable."

A main focus of discussion was the proposed Stakeholder Roundtable, about which a variety of concerns and questions arose. Many of the concerns related to ensuring that all stakeholders are adequately represented and that balance is maintained between sectors. Questions were raised as to how representatives would be chosen for the Roundtable, with the Planning Office responding that stakeholders would choose their own representatives where possible (appointments could be used as a last resort.) Several participants mentioned the importance of ensuring that less powerful stakeholders had a voice at the table. Specific concerns were raised in regard to the fishing industry, in which participants thought that it was important to ensure that small-boat fleets were represented as well as large companies.

On the other hand, some participants argued that an equal say should not necessarily be extended to all stakeholders on every issue. Specifically, it was suggested that some parties have a greater stake in some decisions than others, and that those with the greatest stake should have the most say. Adjacency was proposed as one indicator of the stake that an individual might have in a decision. In other words, it was suggested that the stakeholders who live closest to or who are most active in a given area should have the greatest say over how that area is managed. It was pointed out that local people often have the most intimate knowledge of local ecosystems and resources.

"Striking a balance between adequate representation (big group size) and decisiveness (smaller group size) will be a challenge, and will probably never be perfect."

The challenge of achieving inclusiveness while restricting the Roundtable to an effective operating size was acknowledged. Several participants felt that 26-members was too large a group to make decisions efficiently; however, others felt that not all sectors would be adequately represented by a 26 member body. For example, it was specifically raised that First Nations should have more than 1 or 2 seats. There was also some concern that the proposed membership might not provide adequate opportunity for the general public to be involved.

In regard to encouraging and maintaining stakeholder participation, participants felt that bringing the planning process to communities was a good first step, and that more work was required in this area. Empowering stakeholders to make decisions, especially at the local level, was recognized as an effective way to encourage participation. Faith in the process was identified as necessary to maintaining stakeholder involvement, and the

need for accountability was raised. Capacity was identified as a potential challenge to participation, in which regard participants felt the government had a responsibility to identify under-represented parties and ensure that they had the ability to participate.

Ship Harbour

In Ship Harbour there was general support for the collaborative planning model, but a variety of concerns were brought forward, some similar to those raised in Liverpool and some different. Again, the challenge of building consensus was raised. Participants believed that in some sectors there would be strong resistance to change and unwillingness to compromise, which could be a significant obstacle to consensus building.

"I am concerned that representation could be unbalanced."

The need for balance in the constitution of the Roundtable was raised, and there was some concern that the existing membership structure might be unbalanced and require revision. Nonetheless, participants seemed reasonably optimistic that the Roundtable could effectively represent their sectors, as long as the representatives chosen were well informed and well trusted within their field. Participants acknowledged that some sectors would need support in order to coordinate their participation and pointed out that some stakeholders might not fit into a clearly defined sector. In such cases, the Planning Office would have a responsibility to ensure that all voices were heard. The importance of active efforts by the Planning Office to engage stakeholders and disseminate information was acknowledged.

Participants were very concerned about accountability and quality assurance in the process. They felt that all signatories to the plan should be accountable for its successful implementation, and that monitoring would be required to ensure that all parties were fulfilling their responsibilities. In order to maintain transparency and accountability, it was felt that the process would need to be open to the public at large in addition to traditional 'stakeholders.' Without accountability, participants predicted that stakeholders would be unwilling to buy-in to the planning process. Furthermore, if stakeholders perceived that decisions had been predetermined by government, they would be reluctant to be involved. To ensure participation, the process must be responsive to the ideas and suggestions of all stakeholders.

"There has to be some kind of accountability."

"There are so many meetings the fishers have to attend it can interfere with fishing."

The sheer number of ocean-related initiatives operating concurrently was seen as a potential challenge to participation. It was pointed out that many people feel overwhelmed by meetings and have limited time to contribute to the ESSIM Initiative. Acknowledging other processes and where possible trying to coordinate with them could help to reduce the burden on stakeholders.

Port Hawkesbury

"Meetings based on consensus are un-democratic and the majority opinion will not be heard"

Participants in the Port Hawkesbury workshops generally believed that the planning model was inclusive and transparent, but reserved judgement as to whether it would be effective, noting that only time would tell whether the

model would actually work. Some participants were concerned about the use of consensus on the grounds that it is both undemocratic and difficult to achieve. These participants pointed out that a consensus model would not necessarily achieve the will of the majority. Others felt that the process was generally too complicated and overly ambitious. Despite these criticisms, many participants seemed willing to consider the proposed model as a potential starting point that could be revised in the future based on experience.

"First Nations need to be given a different status from other communities"

First Nations had a variety of specific concerns about their role in the planning model. First Nations are unique in that they share some characteristics with government and some with traditional stakeholders. While First Nations have specific governance responsibilities, rights, and authorities, individuals of First Nations heritage may be ocean users, coastal residents, or advocates of marine conservation. Given their unique position, First Nations felt that their role should go beyond a few seats on the Stakeholder Roundtable. Specifically, it was suggested that they should be included on the Federal-Provincial ESSIM Working Group along with other government departments.

To ensure the effective functioning of the Stakeholder Roundtable, participants recommended that membership be balanced by expertise and knowledge, as well as by sector. Participants also suggested that capacity building initiatives be developed specifically for SRT members (e.g., training and support) and that clear criteria be established for membership. Effective channels for communication within and between sectors were seen to be very important. Some participants noted that existing networks, such as the Scotia-Fundy Fishing Industry roundtable, could play a valuable role in communications between stakeholders. On the other hand, diversity and conflict within some sectors, including the fishing industry, were noted as potential challenges to effective communication.

In order to maintain participation, it was suggested that positive results of the Initiative be regularly communicated to participants in order to demonstrate that the process is working. Regular reporting would also help to ensure that all signatories to the plan follow through with implementation, which participants felt was very important. Some participants believed that stakeholders would be more likely to participate if government departments were more willing to devolve authority to the Initiative. Hectic schedules, lack of resources, and the large number of meetings being held on marine issues were all seen as obstacles to participation, some of which might be overcome by support from the Planning Office. The need to consider seasonal patterns of human activity when planning workshops and meetings was also raised (i.e., avoid consultations during fishing season).

"You need to develop capacity for groups that are overworked and underpaid."

Synthesis of Collaborative Planning Model Discussions

The feedback received affirms support for an ocean planning process that brings together all interested parties to work collaboratively. With a few exceptions, participants felt that the proposed collaborative planning model could be adequately inclusive and transparent, if implemented appropriately. On the other hand, stakeholders were not necessarily ready to judge the effectiveness of the model; most felt that it was too early

to determine whether the process would be effective, acknowledging the need to learn by doing and adapt as necessary.

A number of common concerns related to the use of consensus were raised across the three locations. For the most part consensus was accepted as an appropriate ideal, but participants felt that it would be difficult to achieve because of conflicting interests, entrenched agendas, and resistance to change among some stakeholders. At several of the workshops, it was recommended that decision-making tools other than consensus be considered.

Participants generally acknowledged the value of the Stakeholder Roundtable or a similar body, but recognized the challenge of achieving inclusiveness while allowing for efficient decision making. While some participants felt that the Roundtable was too big and would be unwieldy, others felt that there needed to be more seats to fully represent all groups. Concern that First Nations would not be adequately represented was raised on several occasions. The need for balance on the Stakeholder Roundtable was expressed almost unanimously across all of the workshops. Participants felt that the Roundtable should be balanced in terms of interests, knowledge, experience, and power.

Accountability was a common theme at most of the workshops. Participants mentioned the importance of ensuring that signatories actually follow through with implementation and are accountable for achieving the plan's objectives. In this regard, monitoring and regular reporting were seen to be important.

Capacity was commonly identified as a challenge to participation. Bringing the Initiative to communities, providing resources and support, communicating positive results, and ensuring that the Initiative is responsive to stakeholder input were all seen as means for enhancing participation.

The feedback received provides some useful insights into the challenges that could be involved in implementing the planning model. Recognizing potential obstacles in advance should allow the process to be strengthened and adapted, increasing the likelihood of success. The proposed collaborative planning model remains a proposal, and will be revised as necessary based on the feedback from the Community Workshops, online discussions, and the 3rd ESSIM Forum Workshop. Feedback received thus far suggests that significant care will have to be taken in implementing the model, especially in terms of the formation and operation of the Stakeholder Roundtable. Nonetheless, there seems to be reasonable support for the overall design of the model, given the incorporation of the suggestions recorded above.

2.4 Additional Feedback

In addition to responding to the specific questions posed by the Planning Office, workshop participants were invited to offer feedback on other aspects of the ESSIM Initiative or oceans management in general. A number of participants took advantage of this opportunity, as described below.

"What is ESSIM meant to fix?"

On several occasions workshop participants raised questions about the overall motivation behind and intention of the ESSIM Initiative. These participants felt that the Initiative lacked a clear vision of what it was meant to achieve. It was suggested that the purpose of the Initiative needed to be clearly defined and explicitly stated.

Concerns were raised at several of the workshops about the increasing regulatory burden on ocean users. Several participants noted that the expansion of protected areas networks and the establishment of new regulations and permitting requirements for ocean use have affected the productivity of some sectors. These participants thought that it was important to ensure that the ESSIM Initiative did not further complicate permitting processes or otherwise create unnecessary burdens and delays for ocean users.

A number of workshop participants suggested that the concept of "priority of use" be somehow incorporated into the ESSIM Plan. In other words, some stakeholders felt that the Plan should give certain groups priority in terms of access to specific areas or resources based on historic rights or adjacency. This idea was expressed predominantly in relation to the expansion of new activities that could impinge on traditional users of the ocean (generally fishers).

"I understand that DFO used to follow the principle of "adjacency" in managing the fishery: Giving local fishers priority in a chance to exploit a local stock. This makes sense. DFO should seriously consider giving this principle increased emphasis."

Some of the more general comments and observations made by participants suggest a need to build credibility and faith in the ESSIM process. Especially within certain sectors, there is a degree of scepticism towards new government initiatives that must be overcome. This is not necessarily due to any specific characteristics of the ESSIM Initiative; in fact, in many cases participants who were sceptical at first developed a generally positive opinion of integrated management after attending a workshop. Nonetheless, previous experiences or attitudes among some stakeholders may result in reluctance to embrace the Initiative. To overcome this, benefits to local people and responsiveness to stakeholder input will have to be clearly demonstrated.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

Most participants at the Community Workshops acknowledged the need for new approaches to ocean planning and generally responded positively to the overall concept of integrated management. In particular, participants affirmed the value of a holistic approach that would consider human activities and ecosystems comprehensively, engage stakeholders in the planning process, and work towards sustainability. On the other hand, participants identified a number of significant challenges that will have to be overcome if the ESSIM Initiative is to be successful. Some of the most notable examples included: defining boundaries that reflect both practical and ecological considerations; incorporating the coastal zone; balancing divergent or opposing objectives; ensuring accountability and effective implementation of the Plan; achieving inclusion in the collaborative planning model without sacrificing efficiency; designing decision-making processes that can reconcile competing interests; and maintaining stakeholder participation in light of limited capacity.

"Is Integrated Management, in general, the right direction to take? Yes."

Despite the challenges identified, there was nothing in the feedback to suggest that the proposed approach for the ESSIM Initiative is fundamentally misguided. Although a number of recommendations have been made for potential improvements or refinements to specific aspects of the design of the Initiative, there appears to be general support for its overall thrust and direction. Of course, some participants were more enthusiastic about integrated management than others, and some would like to see more concrete results before committing to the approach. Nonetheless, the feedback affirms many of the key principles that have been adopted to date, and suggests that the Initiative should proceed toward the development and implementation of an integrated ocean management plan.

4.0 NEXT STEPS

The Planning Office is currently preparing an initial draft of the Integrated Ocean Management Plan for the ESSIM Planning Area. Input from the Community Workshops will be incorporated into the draft plan, which should be released by early February, 2005. The draft plan will be discussed with stakeholders at the 3rd ESSIM Forum Workshop, which will be held on February 22nd and 23rd, 2005.

Given sufficient approval of the draft plan at the 3rd ESSIM Forum Workshop, the Stakeholder Roundtable will be formed by June 2005 to begin reviewing and further developing the plan. Public and stakeholder consultations will occur over the summer, after which the SRT will meet again with the intention of reaching consensus on a final draft of the ESSIM Plan. If agreement can be reached from all sectors, decision-makers will endorse the plan in December of 2005, allowing for plan approval under the *Oceans Act* by February 2006.

Approval of the plan does not indicate an end to the ESSIM Initiative; rather, it represents the beginning of the next phase in the integrated management process. This phase will involve implementing, monitoring, and reviewing the plan on an ongoing basis, and will require continued participation from all sectors and stakeholders.

APPENDIX: WORKSHOP EVALUATIONS

Evaluation forms were distributed to all workshop participants to complete and return to Planning Office staff. The evaluations were intended to learn more about participants, assess participants' satisfaction with the presentations and discussion, identify other stakeholders who should have been present, evaluate the effectiveness of the workshop announcements, and capture general impressions. In some cases participants were asked to rate an aspect of the workshop on a scale of 1 to 5, while in other cases only a qualitative response was requested. Seventeen of the 38 participants completed and returned evaluations. Although the Liverpool workshop had the largest attendance it generated the lowest number of evaluations; only two of the sixteen attendees in Liverpool completed evaluation forms. Liverpool was the first location to host a workshop, and at subsequent locations the facilitators more actively encouraged participants to complete evaluations, hence the improvement in response rates. The results of the evaluations are described below.

Familiarity with the Initiative prior to the workshops

As discussed in the introduction to this document, there was significant variation among participants in terms of prior experience with the Initiative. Some had attended previous Forum Workshops or participated in ESSIM working groups and had a thorough knowledge of the Initiative. Others had no previous exposure to the Initiative or very little exposure. Fifty three percent of respondents fell into the unfamiliar category, 19% were 'somewhat' familiar, and 29% considered themselves familiar or very familiar with the Initiative.

Understanding of the Initiative after the Workshops

Almost all of the participants felt that their understanding of the ESSIM Initiative increased substantially as a result of attending a workshop. Those who were least familiar with the Initiative in advance generally learned the most, while participants who had extensive experience with the Initiative did not feel that their understanding increased significantly. Only 1 out of the 17 respondents did not feel that they learned from the workshop, and this was a participant who had been "very familiar" with the Initiative prior to the workshop. Given that the initiative was tailored to a public audience, this finding is consistent with expectations.

Most participants characterized their understanding of the Initiative at the end of the workshop as "pretty good" or "better than before." Nonetheless, many participants still felt that they had more to learn and that their understanding was not complete. This is perhaps unsurprising given that the outcome of six years of work was presented to participants in approximately forty minutes. Interested participants were directed to reference materials for further information.

Usefulness of the Presentation

Participants generally felt that the presentation delivered by the Planning Office was useful. On a scale of 1 to 5, participants gave the presentation an average mark of 4.25, with marks ranging from 3 to 5. Several respondents commented favourably on the effectiveness of the presenters, although some participants suggested that simpler language should be used. Others recommended focussing more on practical examples

and including more information. Nonetheless, the overall level of satisfaction was high, as indicated by the quantitative results.

Appropriateness of discussion questions

Most participants felt that the discussion questions were appropriate. On average, participants gave the questions a rating of 4.3 out of 5, with a range of responses from 2 to 5. Several participants commented that the questions stimulated interesting discussion. Others commented that it was unrealistic for participants to respond to some of the questions without further information and experience. In terms of suggestions for additional questions, some thought that it would be useful to ask participants how they envisioned their role in the Initiative and how they thought the Initiative would affect their community.

Adequacy of opportunities for discussion

Rating their satisfaction with the opportunities for discussion at the workshops, participants responded with an average mark of 4.6 out of 5, with a range from 2 to 5. In Liverpool and Port Hawkesbury a few participants felt that the workshop was slightly rushed, but otherwise participants felt that there was "lots of time for discussion".

Other groups that participants would have liked to see in attendance.

A variety of groups were identified by participants as being underrepresented at the workshops. The most common response was that participants wanted to see more fisheries representatives in attendance. Community economic development groups and tourism associations were also identified as incompletely represented. Some participants responded that they thought more senior fisheries managers should have attended.

Mechanisms for announcing workshops

The vast majority of participants were made aware of the workshops through direct invitations from the Planning Office, predominantly received via e-mail. Several participants heard about the workshops through networks such as fishing associations, or indirectly from friends and colleagues. Local newspapers were suggested as the most effective media for announcing workshops to the public, but no participant acknowledged having come to a workshop as a result of seeing a newspaper announcement.

Overall Impressions

On average, the workshops received an overall rating of 4.25 out of 5, with marks ranging from 3 to 5. Several participants made very positive comments, such as "excellent" and "very useful." None of the respondents were strongly dissatisfied with the workshops, as indicated by the range in the quantitative responses; however, some participants expressed criticism that the workshops were too short and slightly rushed, and that some of the material was not overly interesting.

Overall, the predominance of responses suggests that participants learned from the workshops, approved of the presentation and discussion questions, had adequate opportunities to provide feedback, and were generally satisfied with the workshop experience. Since only about half of participants submitted evaluations, these may have

been the participants who were most interested in the material. It is therefore important to be particularly aware of shortcomings identified and to carefully consider criticisms made by participants when planning future events.

Invitees who did not attend

Hundreds of stakeholders were invited to the Community Workshops. In evaluating the effectiveness of the workshops it is important to consider why some stakeholders chose not to attend. Conversations between the Planning Office and invitees reveal some of the reasons that stakeholders refrained from participating. Although the Planning Office did not speak with all invitees directly, a number of conversations with invitees did occur. During these conversations, the most common reason given for not attending a workshop was previous commitments. Others chose not to attend because they were already involved in or planning to attend another ESSIM session such as the Forum Workshop and therefore they did not feel that it was necessary to go to a Community Workshop. Some stakeholders were disinterested because of the offshore focus, but said that they would participate in the future if the Initiative moved into the coastal zone. For others, the workshops were held too far away from their communities and therefore they could not afford the time and resources required to travel to the workshop locations. This suggests that more workshops in more communities should be considered in the future.